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P.N.E.U. NOTES.

READING BRANCH.—The Summer Meeting of this Branch was held in the Drawing room of Oaklands, Reading, by the very kind permission of Mr. and Mrs. Herbert Sutton. There was a good attendance of members and friends, to hear a paper read by the Rev. M. T. Friend, Chaplain of H.M. Prison, on the "Ethics of Punishment." The subject was treated in a masterly and logical manner, and ended in an interesting discussion of details taken part in by Mrs. R. H. Hart Davis, Miss Haigh, Mrs. W. H. Smith, Alfred Sutton, Esq., H. T. Pugh, Esq., and the Chairman—the Rev. R. H. Hart Davis. A vote of thanks was proposed by Dryland Haslam, Esq., and seconded by Alfred Sutton, Esq.

THE

PARENTS' REVIEW

A MONTHLY MAGAZINE

OF HOME-TRAINING AND CULTURE.

"Education is an atmosphere, a discipline of life."

THE PHILOSOPHY OF KANT.

BY MADAM DE STAËL.

(Translated by Mrs. Lane).

KANT lived to a very advanced age, and yet never left Königsberg, where among northern snows he passed his entire life in meditating on the laws of the human intellect. An indefatigable passion for study enabled him to acquire varied knowledge; science, languages, literature, all were familiar to him, and he contented himself with the silent pleasure of reflection, without seeking that renown which came to him only when advanced in life. In solitude he contemplated his own soul; the investigation of the mind gave him fresh weapons in support of virtue; and though he never took part in the violent passions of men, he could forge arms for those who might be called to battle. Except amongst the Greeks, there is hardly any example of a life so strictly philosophical; and this very life is in itself a proof of the good faith of the writer. To this strict honesty must be added a refined and well balanced mind, which served to correct his genius when it allowed itself to be carried too far. This seems to me to show that we should set

ourselves to judge impartially the persevering work of such a man.

Kant began by publishing several writings on physical science, and he showed so much sagacity in these studies, that it was he who first foresaw the existence of the planet Uranus. Herschel himself, after having made the discovery, acknowledged that Kant had announced it. His treatise on the nature of the Human Understanding, entitled *A Critique of Pure Reason*, was for some time little known; but when at length it was discovered what a wealth of ideas it contained, such an impression was produced in Germany, that nearly everything which has been done since in literature or philosophy can be traced to the impulse given by that work.

To this treatise on the Human Understanding succeeded the *Critique of Practical Reason*, treating of morality, and the *Critique of Judgment*, the subject of which was the nature of the beautiful. The same theory is at the base of all three treatises which embrace the laws of the understanding, the principles of virtue, and the contemplation of the beauties of Nature and of Art.

I will endeavour to give a sketch of the principal ideas contained in this doctrine. Whatever pains I may take to expound with clearness, I cannot disguise from myself that attention will be necessary to understand. A prince who was learning mathematics was irritated by the application required for that study. His teacher replied, "It is absolutely necessary for your Highness to take the trouble to study in order to learn, for there is no royal road to mathematics." The French public, which considers itself a prince, must allow itself to be told that there is no royal road to metaphysics, and that to arrive at the comprehension of any theory, it is necessary to pass through the intermediate stages which have led the author himself to his own conclusions.

Materialist philosophy delivered the human understanding to the rule of external objects, reduced morality to personal interest, and the beautiful to the merely agreeable. Kant wished to re-establish primitive truth; the spontaneous activity of the soul, conscience in morality, and the ideal in the arts. Let us now examine in what manner he attained these different objects.

At the time when *A Critique of Pure Reason* appeared, there were only two "systems" of the Human Intellect received amongst philosophers; the one, that of Locke, attributed all our ideas to our sensations; the other, that of Descartes and Leibnitz, endeavoured to demonstrate the spirituality and activity of the soul, free-will, in a word the whole idealist doctrine. But both philosophies rested their doctrines on purely speculative proofs. The algebraic method applied to objects which cannot be taken hold of by reasoning alone, can leave no permanent trace in the mind. Whilst reading these lofty philosophic conceptions one thinks one understands them, one thinks one believes in them, but those arguments, which appear the most convincing, soon escape the memory.

Must man, weary with his efforts, confine himself to the knowledge he gains through his senses?—in that case there could be but pain for his soul! Whence shall he get the idea of immortality when the fore-runners of destruction are so distinctly visible on the faces of mortals, and when living nature is hourly falling into dust? When all the senses speak of death, what faint hope could speak to us of re-birth? If the senses alone were consulted, what idea could one form of the supreme goodness? So many sorrows undermine our life, so many hideous objects dishonour nature that the unfortunate mortal curses existence a hundred times before a last convulsion snatches it from him. Should man, on the contrary, reject the testimony of his senses, how shall he steer his course in this world? and if he only trusts to them how shall enthusiasm, morality, and religion resist the repeated assaults on them from sorrow or from pleasure?

Thought was straying in this immense incertitude when Kant endeavoured to trace out the limits of the two kingdoms of the senses and of the soul, of external nature, and of intellectual nature. The power of thought and the wisdom with which he traced these limits were unexampled. He did not wander into new systems on the creation of the universe; he recognized the limits that the Eternal mysteries must impose on the human mind, and a point which may be new to those who have heard only of Kant is that there is no philosopher more opposed to ordinary metaphysics on certain points. He only studied the depths of that science to employ

it as the very means to demonstrate its insufficiency. One might say that he, like a new Curtius, cast himself into the abyss of abstraction for the purpose of filling it up.

Locke has victoriously combated the doctrine of ideas being innate in man, because he always represented ideas as being part of experimental knowledge. The examination of pure reason, that is to say, of the original faculties forming the intellect never drew his attention. Leibnitz pronounced this noble axiom "there is nothing in the mind that does not come from the senses, except the mind itself." Kant, as well as Locke, recognized that there are no innate ideas, but he set before himself the endeavour to discover the sense of the axiom of Leibnitz by examining what are the laws and sentiments which constitute the essence of the human soul, independently of all experience. *The Critique of Pure Reason* is devoted to the demonstration of these laws and what the objects are on which they can be exercised.

Scepticism, to which materialism almost invariably leads, had gone so far that Hume had ended by overthrowing the basis of logic itself, in seeking arguments against the axiom that there is no effect without a cause.

Kant wished to discover if absolute certainty were possible to the human mind, and he only found it in necessary ideas, that is to say in those of the laws of our understanding, of which the nature is such that we cannot conceive anything as differing from its representation by those laws.

In the front rank of the imperative forms of our mind are space and time. Kant demonstrates that all our perceptions are subject to these two forms. He concludes that they are in ourselves, not in external objects, and that on this point it is our understanding which gives laws to external nature instead of receiving them. Geometry, which measures space, and arithmetic, which measures time, are sciences capable of complete proof, because they rest on necessary ideas in our mind.

Truths acquired by experience never carry with them this absolute certainty. When anyone says "The sun rises every day," "All men are mortal," imagination could conceive an exception to these truths which experience alone makes us consider indubitable. But imagination itself cannot suppose anything without the range of space and time.

To this primitive intuition of space and time we must add, or rather give for basis, the principles of reasoning, without which we can understand nothing, and which are the laws of our intellect. The relations of cause and effect, unity, plurality, totality, possibility, reality, necessity, etc. Kant considers these as equally necessary ideas, and raises to the rank of sciences only such departments of knowledge as are directly based on those ideas, because it is in these only that certainty can exist. The forms of logic have no result except as applied to judging external objects, and in that application are subject to error. But they are not the less necessary in themselves, *i.e.*, we cannot escape from them in any of our thoughts. It is impossible for us to conceive anything beyond the relations of cause and effect, of possibility, of quantity, and these ideas are as inherent in our minds as space and time. We can perceive nothing except through the unchangeable laws of our manner of reasoning. Thus these laws are also in ourselves, and not external to us.

German philosophers call subjective ideas those that arise from the nature of our intelligence, and of its faculties and ideas; objective, those that are excited by sensations. Whatever may be the nomenclature we adopt on this point, it appears to me that the examination of our mind agrees with the dominant idea of Kant, *i.e.*, the distinction that he establishes between the processes of our understanding and the objects which we know through these processes; and whether he only refers to abstract conceptions, or whether he addresses himself (as in religion, or morality) to the sentiments which he considers as equally independent of experience, nothing is more clear than the line of demarcation that he traces between that which comes from our senses and that which belongs to the spontaneous action of our soul.

Some expressions in the teaching of Kant having been wrongly interpreted, it has been pretended that he believed in a priori knowledge, *i.e.*, that which is imprinted on our minds without our having learnt it. Other German philosophers approaching more nearly to the philosophy of Plato have indeed thought that the arche-type of the world exists in the human mind; and that man can only conceive of the universe as he has its image innate in himself. But there is no question of this doctrine in Kant. He reduces the

intellectual sciences to three—logic, metaphysics and mathematics. Logic teaches nothing of itself, but as it rests on the laws of our understanding its principles considered in the abstract are incontrovertible. This science can only lead to truth by its application to words and things; its principles are innate but its application is experimental. As to metaphysics, Kant practically denies their existence, as he contends that reasoning can only exist in the sphere of experience. Mathematics alone appeared to him to depend directly on the notions of space and time, that is to say to those laws of our understanding anterior to our experience. He endeavours to prove that mathematics are not a simple analysis, but a synthetic positive science, creative and certain in itself without its being necessary to have recourse to experience to test its truth. One must study in the works of Kant the arguments on which he rests this view, but it is true at least that there is no man more opposed to what is called the philosophy of dreamers, and he is more inclined to a dry and didactic style of thought, although the object of his teaching was to raise the human race degraded by materialistic philosophy.

Far from rejecting experience, Kant considered the business of life as being nothing more than the action of our innate faculties on external knowledge. He believes that experience would be only a chaos without the laws of the understanding, but that these can only have for object the materials presented by experience. It follows that beyond these limits metaphysics themselves can teach us nothing, and that it is to spiritual perceptions that must be attributed the knowledge and belief in all beyond the visible world.

When it is desired to employ reasoning alone in order to establish religious truth it is an instrument that bends in every direction, equally adapted to defend or attack it, because it is impossible to find any foundation in experience. Kant places in two parallel lines the arguments for and against the liberty of man, the immortality of the soul, the fleeting or eternal duration of the world, and it is to the spiritual sense that he appeals to incline the balance, as the metaphysical truths appear to him of equal weight on one side or the other. Perhaps he was wrong in pushing so far the scepticism of reasoning, but it is to annihilate this scepticism more surely in

eliminating from certain questions the abstract discussions which have caused it.

It would be unjust to suspect the sincere piety of Kant because he has upheld that in the great questions of transcendental metaphysics the reasons for and against were equal. It appears to me that there is honesty in this avowal. So few minds are capable of comprehending such reasoning, and those which are capable have so great a tendency to quarrel among themselves, that it is rendering a great service to religious belief to banish metaphysics from those questions which concern the existence of God, free-will and the knowledge of good and evil.

Some thoughtful writers say that no weapon must be neglected, and that metaphysical arguments must be employed to persuade those who trust in them. But such arguments lead to discussion, and discussion to doubt on whatever subject it may be.

The great epochs of the human race have been always those in which the greatest truths have never been contested either by writing or by speech. Evil passions might lead to wicked deeds, but no one cast a doubt on religion, even if he did not obey its precepts. Sophisms of all kinds, the abuse of one sort of philosophy, have in divers countries and in different centuries destroyed this noble steadfastness of belief and source of heroic devotion. Is it not therefore a noble idea for a philosopher to forbid the entrance of the sanctuary to the very science he professes, and to employ the whole weight of abstract ideas to prove that there are regions from which they must be banished.

Despots and fanatics have endeavoured to prohibit the examination of certain subjects by the human reason, but reason has always freed itself from these unjust barriers. But the limits that the mind imposes on itself far from enslaving it, give it a new strength, that which results always from the authority of laws freely agreed to by those who submit to them.

A deaf mute before having gone through the education of the Abbé Sicard might have an innate certainty of the existence of the Deity. Many men are as far removed from profound thinkers as deaf mutes are from other men, and nevertheless are not less susceptible of experiencing as it were

in themselves, natural truths, because these truths arise from feeling.

Doctors in the physical study of man, recognize the principle which animates him, and nevertheless no one knows what life is; or if one were to begin to reason it would be quite possible like some Greek philosophers, to prove to men that they do not exist. It is the same concerning God, conscience, free-will. One must believe in them because one feels them. All argument must be placed in an inferior rank to this fact.

Anatomy cannot be exercised on a living body without destroying it. Analysis in experimenting on indivisible truths disfigures them, for the very reason that she attacks their unity. We must divide our soul in two for one half to make observations on the other. In whatever manner this division may be made, it takes from our being that noble identity without which we have not the necessary strength to believe what conscience alone can affirm.

Assemble a great number of men in a theatre or a public place, and tell them by reasoning some truth of the most general description. In a moment you will receive as many different opinions as there are individuals present. But if some tale of heroism is told or of generosity, immediately unanimous exclamations will show you that you have touched that instinct of the soul, as living and powerful in our being as the instinct of self-preservation.

In referring the knowledge of transcendental truths to feeling which admits of no doubt, in seeking to prove that reasoning is only valid in the sphere of the senses, Kant is far from considering the power of feeling as an illusion. He assigns to it on the contrary the first place in human nature. He makes conscience the innate principle of our moral existence, and the perception of right and wrong, is according to him, the original law of the heart as space and time that of the intellect.

Has not man by the aid of reasoning denied free-will? and yet he is so strongly convinced of it that he detects himself experiencing esteem and contempt for the animals themselves, so strongly does he believe in the innate power of choice, of good and evil in all beings.

It is sentiment that gives us this certainty of our freedom, and this freedom is the foundation of the doctrine of duty, for

if man is free, he ought to create for himself all powerful motives to combat the action of external objects, and to free the will from selfishness. Duty is the guarantee of the metaphysical independence of man.

We shall examine the arguments of Kant in contradiction to a morality founded on personal interest, and the noble theory with which he replaces that hypocritical sophism and perverse doctrine. It is possible to see Kant's first work *The Critique of Pure Reason* from two points of view. Precisely because he recognized reason as insufficient and contradictory he had to expect that it would be used against him. But it appears to me impossible not to read with respect his *Critique of Practical Reason*, and his different writings on morality.

Not only are the principles of Kant's morality austere and pure, as might be expected from his philosophical inflexibility, but he unites constantly the testimony of the heart to that of the understanding, and takes singular delight in applying his abstract theory on the nature of the mind in support of the simplest and strongest sentiments.

A conscience acquired through the senses could easily be stifled by them, and the dignity of duty is degraded in making it depend on external objects. Kant therefore returns frequently to demonstrate that the profound feeling of this dignity is the necessary condition of our moral being, and the law by which it exists. The power of the senses and the evil actions which they make us commit, can no more destroy within us the idea of right and wrong, than that of space and time is injured by the errors of application which we may make of them. There is always in whatever environment one may be a force of reaction against circumstances which arises from the depth of the soul, and one feels that neither the laws of understanding, nor moral freedom, nor conscience can come to us from mere experience.

In his treatise on the sublime and the beautiful entitled *A Critique of Judgment*, Kant applies to the pleasures of the imagination, the same system from which he derived such fertile developments in the sphere of mind and feeling; or rather it is the same soul which he investigates, and which manifests itself in science, in morality and in the fine arts. Kant maintains that in poetry and in those other arts which

are worthy to depict the sentiments of the heart by visual images, two kinds of beauty, the one in touch with this life and time, the other, with the eternal and the infinite.

And let no one say that the infinite and the eternal are unintelligible. It is the finite and the mortal, which one would often be tempted to believe as but a dream, for thought can define no limits to Nothing, and Being cannot conceive No-Being. One cannot even enter deeply into the exact sciences without meeting with the infinite and the eternal, and things that seem most tangible belong as much under certain relations to this infinite and this eternal as feeling and imagination.

From this application of the sentiment of the infinite to art must arise the ideal, *i.e.* the beautiful, not considered as the mere gathering together and imitation of what is best in nature, but as the realised image of that which our soul presents to itself. Materialistic philosophers judge the beautiful with regard to the agreeable sensations it causes, and place it thus in the domain of the senses. Spiritual philosophers who refer all to reason, see the perfect in the beautiful and find some analogy between the useful and the good, which are the first steps of the perfect. Kant rejects both interpretations.

The beautiful considered only as the agreeable would be imprisoned in the world of the senses, and subject therefore to difference of taste. It could not deserve that general assent which is the true character of beauty. Beauty defined as perfection should exact our esteem. The enthusiasm which beauty should inspire belongs neither to the senses nor to the judgment. It is an innate disposition like the feeling of duty and the necessary truths of our understanding, and we recognise beauty when we see it, because it is the external image of the ideal of which the archi-type is in our own minds. A difference of taste may be applied to that which is only agreeable, for the senses are the source of that kind of pleasure, but all men must admire the beautiful, whether in art or in nature, because they have in their soul the divine feeling which beauty awakens, and which causes them to enjoy it.

Kant passes from the theory of the beautiful to that of the sublime, and this second part of his *Critique of Judgment*

is even more remarkable than the first. He makes the sublime consist in moral freedom struggling with destiny and with nature. Unlimited power terrifies us, magnitude overwhelms us, nevertheless we escape by the strength of our will from this feeling of physical weakness, the power of destiny and the immensity of nature are in perpetual opposition to the miserable dependence of the human creature, but one spark of sacred fire in our soul conquers the universe since that spark is sufficient to resist everything which the whole power of the world might demand from us.

The first effect of the sublime is to overwhelm man, the second to raise him. When we contemplate the storm arousing the waves of the sea, and appearing to threaten both earth and heaven, terror takes hold of us even if we are out of reach of personal danger. But as the clouds heap themselves up when all the forces of nature are manifested, man feels an inward energy which can deliver him from every fear through strength of will or resignation, by the exercise or abdication of his moral freedom, and this knowledge of himself revives and encourages him.

When we are told of a noble action, when we hear that men have borne unheard-of tortures to remain faithful to their opinions, at first the image of their sufferings overwhelms our thought, but by degrees we regain our powers of mind, and the sympathy which we feel with their greatness of soul makes us hope that we could also triumph over our miserable senses to remain true, noble and dignified to the end of our life.

In fact no one can define what is, so to speak, the highest point of our existence. St. Augustin says, "we are too much above ourselves to understand ourselves." He would have a very poor imagination who could believe he could exhaust the contemplation of the simplest flower, how then could he attain to the knowledge of all that is contained in the idea of the sublime?

I do not flatter myself that I have been able in a few pages to describe a system which has occupied for twenty years all the thinkers of Germany, but I hope to have said enough to indicate the general spirit of the philosophy of Kant, and its influence on literature, science, and morality. In order to conciliate experimental philosophy with idealist philosophy,

Kant has not subjected one to the other, but has given to each individually a new degree of strength. Germany was threatened with that dreary teaching which looked upon enthusiasm as an error, and set down as prejudice the most consoling emotions of life. It must have been a lively satisfaction for a race at once philosophical and poetical, as capable of study as of enthusiasm, to find all the beautiful affections of the soul defended with the strictness of abstract reasoning. The power of the mind cannot be long negative; it cannot consist principally in things not believed in, in those not understood, or in those despised. A philosophy of belief, of enthusiasm is necessary, a philosophy which confirms by reason what feeling reveals.

The adversaries of Kant have accused him of having only repeated the arguments of the ancient idealists. They have pretended that the teaching of the German philosopher was merely an ancient system in new words. This reproach is unfounded, there are both new ideas and a special character in the teaching of Kant.

It shows traces of the philosophy of the 18th century, although intended to refute it, because a man must enter into the spirit of his time even when he wishes to combat it. The philosophy of Plato is more poetical than that of Kant; the philosophy of Malebranche more distinctly religious; but the great merit of the German philosopher has been that he has raised up moral dignity, in giving a strong logical theory as basis for all that is noblest in the heart. The opposition which men have endeavoured to place between reason and feeling must infallibly lead reason to egotism, and sentiment to folly. But Kant, whose vocation it was specially to form great intellectual alliances, has made of the soul a single home, where all the faculties live in mutual harmony.

The polemical portion of the works of Kant, those in which he attacks materialist philosophy, is in itself worthy of the highest admiration. That philosophy has taken such deep root in many minds and has produced so much irreligion and selfishness that a mere revival of the thoughts of Plato, of Descartes, or of Leibnitz would have been a benefit. But the philosophy of the new German school contains a host of ideas special to it. It is founded on enormous scientific knowledge, daily receiving accession, and

on a method of reasoning singularly abstract and logical, for although Kant blames the employment of this kind of reasoning in the examination of truths beyond the range of experience, he shows in his writings a metaphysical strength which places him in the first rank of thinkers.

It cannot be denied that the style of Kant in his *Critique of Pure Reason* deserves much of the blame given to it by its adversaries. He has used terms very hard to understand, and a wearying neologism. He lived alone with his thoughts and persuaded himself that new ideas needed new words, although there were already words for all.

On the points that were clear in themselves, Kant frequently uses a very obscure style of metaphysics, and it is only in the dark places of thought that he carries a luminous torch. He resembles the Israelites who had a column of fire as a guide during the night, but a cloudy one in daylight.

Works bristling with difficulty as these of Kant would have stood a small chance of study in France, except with patient and persevering readers; this is not, however, a valid reason for these unnecessary difficulties. Perhaps, however, he would not have dug down so deep in the science of the human understanding if he had attached more importance to the expressions he used to explain it. Ancient philosophers always divided their teaching into two distinct parts, that which they reserved for the initiated and that which they taught in public. The style of Kant's writing is quite different, both as to his theory and as to the application of that theory.

In his metaphysical treatises he uses words like ciphers, giving them the value he requires, without troubling himself with those given to them by custom. That appears to me a great mistake, for the attention of the reader is wearied in endeavouring to comprehend the language before reaching the ideas, and the known can never be used as a stepping-stone to arrive at the unknown.

It is necessary however, to do Kant justice even as a writer when he gives up his scientific language. In speaking of arts, and especially of morality, his style is nearly always perfectly clear, energetic, and simple. How admirable then appears his doctrine! How well he expresses feeling for the beautiful and love of duty! With what strength he

separates each from all calculation of interest or utility! How he ennobles actions through their source and not for their success! In a word what moral grandeur does he not give to man, whether in himself or in his external relations! Man, that exile from Heaven, that prisoner on earth! So great as an exile, so miserable as a captive!

It would be possible to extract from the writings of Kant a host of brilliant ideas on all subjects, and perhaps it is from this teaching alone that it would be possible in these days to extract new and ingenious views, for the materialist philosophy can no longer offer anything interesting or original. The piquancy of jokes against what is serious, noble, and divine is used up, and the youth of the human race can only be restored in future by returning to religion through philosophy, and to feeling through reason.

BOTANICAL WAIFS AND STRAYS.

By W. M. Hind, LL.D.

It is a common experience of collectors of wild plants to fall in with foreign species unexpectedly, and, not infrequently, with home species at a distance from their natural localities. That these strangers should present themselves to professed botanists as a rule, and not to the world generally, has in some cases exposed the finders to the suspicion of reporting fictions rather than facts. Facts they are notwithstanding, witnessed by the contents of many Herbaria. It is a collector's business to use his eyes, to recognize the forms which experience has made familiar to him and to greet with pleasure a new face among old friends, or a well known face in a strange locality. Meeting with a foreign plant on our shores, or, a well known species in a strange locality, the natural inquiry is, How came it here? A satisfactory reply however is not always forthcoming. In some cases the stranger can give no account of itself; while in other cases a sufficient answer may be found.

Man's hand has, in most instances, been the instrument by which the plant of foreign origin has been introduced to a new home. Not necessarily with a conscious knowledge and of set purpose, yet by his agency, does the stranger find a home in our soil and grow among the wild plants of our land. A considerable number of species, which have obtained a permanent standing in our British Flora, owe their position to human agency. They were at one time strays from cultivation, either from the garden or the farm. Other species still occupy only a debateable position among our British plants. The *Apennine* and *Crowfoot Windflowers* can in almost all cases be traced to a neighbouring garden. The *Pheasant's Eye*, though occasionally found in a cornfield, is more at home in the garden. The *Winter Aconite* has strayed from the shrubberies, where it was once planted; but finds its most congenial home in them still. The *Welsh Poppy*, indigenous in Wales and the Lake district, is only a garden